

Memorandum

To: Julie Dubick
From: James Ingram
Re: Modifications to Charter section 40
Date: September 26, 2007

Per request of the Subcommittee chairperson, I investigated the possibility of converting the Subcommittee's recommendation into strikeout and underline format. Initially, that task looked extremely difficult, since my recommended language had attempted to impose order upon the chaotic structure of Charter section 40 by organizing items in a more logical manner. As an alternative, I composed an annotated version of Section 40. This showed both the proposed changes, and where items were being moved in the new language. On September 22, I emailed the Subcommittee members both the revisions which they had requested, as well as the annotated section 40.

In composing the annotated version of section 40, I was struck by the difficulty of determining how much of the Subcommittee's proposal was new Charter language, versus how much is in the present Charter. I realized that the full Committee would not be able to deliberate on a modification of Charter section 40 if it is unclear exactly what those modifications are. Consequently, I returned the original text of that section and placed all of the modifications that the Subcommittee voted to make into its language. This allowed me to give a clear strikeout and underline version of the language proposed for the section.

Of course, I made certain that all of the changes the Subcommittee voted to make are included in the language. Specifically, the Subcommittee voted to create professional qualifications for those elected to the Office of City Attorney, to define the civil client as the municipal corporation of the City of San Diego, to clarify control and settlement of litigation, and to establish a process whereby a City entity may request outside legal counsel if the entity can demonstrate that the City Attorney has an ethical or financial conflict of interest in providing it with legal advice. The retention of any such counsel would continue to be deducted from that entity's budget.

Of course, I still wanted to correct other problems with section 40. I corrected the gender references, for example, and added titles to the subsections to clarify what every part of section 40 regards. That clarity is currently missing from the section. Below I have enclosed my proposed modification to section 40, the language I had previously sent you, and the proposed Municipal Code language.

Staff Proposal for Modification of Section 40

Section 40: City Attorney

(a) Qualifications and Election. The City Attorney must be qualified to practice in all the courts of the state. ~~At the municipal primary and general election in 1977,~~ ~~a City Attorney shall be elected by the people for a term of seven (7) years.~~ ~~A~~ The City Attorney shall thereafter be elected for a term of four (4) years in the manner prescribed by Section 10 of this Charter.

(b) Term Limit. Notwithstanding any other provision of this Charter and commencing with elections held in 1992, no person shall serve more than two (2) consecutive four-year terms as City Attorney. If for any reason a person serves a partial term as City Attorney in excess of two (2) years, that partial term shall be considered a full term for purposes of this term limit provision. Persons holding the office of City Attorney prior to the November 1992 election shall not have prior or current terms be counted for the purpose of applying this term limit provision to future elections.

(c) Chief Legal Adviser. The City Attorney shall be the chief legal adviser of, and attorney for the City and all Departments and offices thereof in matters relating to their official powers and duties, except in the case of the Ethics Commission, which shall have its own legal counsel independent of the City Attorney.

(d) Prohibition on Outside Employment. The attorney and his or her deputies shall devote their full time to the duties of the office and shall not engage in private legal practice during the term for which they are employed by the City, except to carry to a conclusion any matters for which they have been retained prior to taking office.

(e) Employment of Assistants. The City Attorney shall appoint such deputies, assistants, and employees to serve him or her, as may be provided by ordinance of the Council, but all appointments of subordinates other than deputies and assistants shall be subject to the Civil Service provisions of this Charter.

(f) Powers and Duties. It shall be the City Attorney's duty, either personally or by such assistants as he or she may designate, to perform all services incident to the legal department; to give advice in writing when so requested, to the Mayor, the Council, its Committees, the Manager, the Commissions, or Directors of any department, but all such advice shall be in writing with the citation of authorities in support of the conclusions expressed in said written opinions; to prosecute or defend, as the case may be, all suits or cases to which the City may be a party; to prosecute for all offenses against the ordinances of the City and for such offenses against the laws of the State as may be required of the City Attorney by law; to prepare in writing all ordinances, resolutions, contracts, bonds, or other instruments in which the City is concerned, and to endorse on each approval of the form or correctness thereof; to preserve in the City Attorney's office a docket of all cases in which the City is interested in any of the courts and keep a record of all proceedings of said cases; to preserve in the City Attorney's office copies of all written opinions he or she has furnished to the Council, Manager, Commission, or any officer. Such docket, copies and papers shall be the property of the City, and the City Attorney shall, on retiring from office, deliver the same, together with all books, accounts, vouchers, and necessary information, to his or her successor in office.

(g) Legal Documents. The City Attorney shall have charge and custody of all legal papers, books, and dockets belonging to the City pertaining to his or her office, and, upon a receipt therefor, may demand and receive from any officer of the City any book, paper, documents, or evidence necessary to be used in any suit, or required for the purpose of the office.

(h) Control of Litigation.

The civil client of the City Attorney is the municipal corporation, the City of San Diego and the officers through which it acts. The City Attorney shall defend the City

in litigation, as well as its officers and employees as provided by ordinance. The City Attorney may initiate civil litigation on behalf of the City or the People of the State of California, and shall initiate civil litigation on behalf of the City only when requested to do so by the authority having control over the litigation as set forth below. The City Attorney shall manage all litigation of the City, subject to client direction in accordance with this section, and subject to the City Attorney's duty to act in the best interests of the City and to conform to professional and ethical obligations. In the course of litigation, client decisions, including a decision to initiate litigation, shall be made by the Mayor or the Council in accordance with this section. However, the decision to settle litigation shall be made in accordance with subsection (i) of Charter section 40.

(1) **Council.** The Council shall make client decisions in litigation involving matters over which the Charter gives the Council responsibility.

(2) **Mayor.** The Mayor shall make client decisions in litigation involving matters over which the Charter gives the Mayor responsibility.

(3) **Authority to Request the Courts to Restrain or Compel Action by City Officials.** The City Attorney shall apply, upon order of the ~~Council~~client, in the name of the City, to a court of competent jurisdiction for an order or injunction to restrain the misapplication of funds of the City or the abuse of corporate powers, or the execution or performance of any contract made in behalf of the City which may be in contravention of the law or ordinances governing it, or which was procured by fraud or corruption. The City Attorney shall apply, upon order of the ~~Council~~client, to a court of competent jurisdiction for a writ of mandamus to compel the performance of duties of any officer or commission which fails to perform any duty expressly enjoined by law or ordinance.

(4) **Interpretation of Section.** The City Attorney shall have the authority to make the determination regarding who is authorized to make client decisions on behalf of the City in accordance with the principles of this section and accepted principles of representation of municipal entities.

(i) Settlement of Litigation.

(1) **Settlements Involving Only Money Damages.** The Mayor and Council shall establish by ordinance a process for the approval or rejection of settlement involving money damages.

(2) **Other Settlements.** The Council shall have the authority to approve or reject settlement of litigation that does not involve only the payment or receipt of money, subject to veto of the Mayor, and Council override of the Mayor's veto, as provided under this Charter.

(j) Other Duties. The City Attorney shall perform such other duties of a legal nature as the Council may by ordinance require or as are provided by the Constitution and general laws of the State.

(k) Employment of Other Legal Counsel.

(1) The Council shall have authority to employ additional competent technical legal attorneys to investigate or prosecute matters connected with the departments of the City when such assistance or advice is necessary in connection therewith. The Council shall provide sufficient funds in the annual appropriation ordinance for such purposes and shall charge such additional legal service against the appropriation of the respective Departments.

(2) Any elected officer, department head, board or commission may engage counsel other than the City Attorney for legal advice regarding a particular matter where the elected officer, department head, board or commission has reason to believe that the City Attorney may have a prohibited financial conflict of interest under California law

or a prohibited ethical conflict of interest under the California Rules of Professional Conduct with regard to the matter. The Mayor and Council shall provide by ordinance a process for determining whether the retention of outside legal counsel is justified. The cost of said process, and the cost for any of the services of outside legal counsel, shall be charged against the appropriation of the entity requesting such counsel. The Council shall provide sufficient funds in the annual appropriation ordinance for such purposes.

(l) Salary. The salary of the City Attorney shall be fixed by the Council and set forth in the annual appropriation ordinance, provided that the salary of the City Attorney may not be decreased during a term of office, but in no event shall said salary be less than \$15,000.00 per year. In the event that another section of this Charter authorizes the Salary Setting Commission to establish salaries for all elected officials, the salary of the City Attorney shall be fixed in the manner prescribed by that section.

(m) Vacancy. In the event of a vacancy occurring in the office of the City Attorney by reason of any cause, the Council shall have authority to fill such vacancy, which said authority shall be exercised within thirty (30) days after the vacancy occurs. Any person appointed to fill such vacancy shall hold office until the next regular municipal election, at which time a person shall be elected to serve the unexpired term. Said appointee shall remain in office until a successor is elected and qualified.

Subcommittee Recommendation

Sec. 40. City Attorney

(a) Qualifications, Election, Compensation and Vacancy.

(1) The City Attorney must be qualified to practice in all the courts of the state. The attorney and his or her deputies shall devote their full time to the duties of the office and shall not engage in private legal practice during the term for which they are employed by the City, except to carry to a conclusion any matters for which they have been retained prior to taking office.

(2) The City Attorney shall be elected for a term of four (4) years in the manner prescribed by section 10 of this Charter. Notwithstanding any other provision of this Charter and commencing with elections held in 1992, no person shall serve more than two (2) consecutive four-year terms as City Attorney. If for any reason a person serves a partial term as City Attorney in excess of two (2) years, that partial term shall be considered a full term for purposes of this term limit provision. Persons holding the office of City Attorney prior to the November 1992 election shall not have prior or current terms be counted for the purpose of applying this term limit provision to future elections.

(3) The salary of the City Attorney shall be fixed by the Council and set forth in the annual appropriation ordinance, provided that the salary of the City Attorney may not be decreased during a term of office, but in no event shall said salary be less than \$15,000.00 per year.

(4) In the event of a vacancy occurring in the office of the City Attorney by reason of any cause, the Council shall have authority to fill such vacancy, which said authority shall be exercised within thirty (30) days after the vacancy occurs. Any person appointed to fill such vacancy shall hold office until the next regular municipal election, at which time a person shall be elected to serve the unexpired term. Said appointee shall remain in office until a successor is elected and qualified.

(b) Powers and Duties.

The powers and duties of the City Attorney shall be as follows:

(1) It shall be the City Attorney's duty, either personally or by such assistants as he or she may designate, to perform all services incident to the legal department. The City Attorney shall represent the City in all legal proceedings against the City. The City Attorney shall initiate appropriate legal proceedings on behalf of the City.

(2) The City Attorney shall be the legal advisor to the City, and to all City Boards, Commissions, Committees, Departments, officers and entities. The City Attorney shall give advice or opinion in writing when requested to do so by the Mayor, the Council, its Committees, the Manager, the Commissions, or Directors of any department, but all such advice shall be in writing with the citation of authorities in support of the conclusions expressed in said written opinions.

(3) The City Attorney shall prosecute on behalf of the people all criminal cases and related proceedings arising from violation of the provisions of the Charter and City ordinances, and all misdemeanor offenses arising from violation of the laws of the state occurring in the City.

(4) The City Attorney shall prepare in writing all ordinances, resolutions, contracts, bonds, or other instruments in which the City is concerned, and endorse on each approval of the form or correctness thereof. The City Attorney shall approve in writing the form of all surety or other bonds required by the Charter, or by ordinance, before the bonds are submitted to the proper body, board or officer for final approval, and no such bond shall be approved without approval as to form by the City Attorney. The City Attorney shall approve in writing the form of all contracts before the contracts are entered into by or on behalf of the City.

(5) The City Attorney shall keep records of all actions and proceedings in which the City or any officer or board is an interested party, and copies of all written opinions given by the City Attorney's office. The City Attorney shall comply with all requests for information from the Mayor or Council, and shall report on a regular basis to the Mayor and Council on all matters of litigation, in a form and at times specified by ordinance. In all litigation involving potential financial liability of the City, the City Attorney shall keep the Mayor and Council informed as to the status and progress of litigation.

(6) The City Attorney shall have charge and custody of all legal papers, books, and dockets belonging to the City pertaining to his or her office, and, upon a receipt therefor, may demand and receive from any officer of the City any book, paper, documents, or evidence necessary to be used in any suit, or required for the purpose of the office.

(7) The City Attorney shall perform such other duties of a legal nature as the Council may by ordinance require or as are provided by the Constitution and general laws of the State.

(8) The City Attorney shall preserve in the City Attorney's office a docket of all cases in which the City is interested in any of the courts and keep a record of all proceedings of said cases; to preserve in the City Attorney's office copies of all written opinions he or she has furnished to the Council, Manager, Commission, or any officer. Such docket, copies and papers shall be the property of the City, and the City Attorney shall, on retiring from office, deliver the same, together with all books, accounts, vouchers, and necessary information, to his or her successor in office.

(c) Control of Litigation.

The civil client of the City Attorney is the municipal corporation, the City of San Diego and the officers through which it acts. The City Attorney shall defend the City in litigation, as well as its officers and employees as provided by ordinance. The City Attorney may initiate civil litigation on behalf of the City or the People of the State of California, and shall initiate civil litigation on behalf of the City only when requested to do so by the authority having control over the litigation as set forth below. The City Attorney shall manage all litigation of the City, subject to client direction in

accordance with this section, and subject to the City Attorney's duty to act in the best interests of the City and to conform to professional and ethical obligations. In the course of litigation, client decisions, including a decision to initiate litigation, shall be made by the Mayor or the Council in accordance with this section. However, the decision to settle litigation shall be made in accordance with subsection (d) of Charter section 40.

(1) **Council.** The Council shall make client decisions in litigation involving matters over which the Charter gives the Council responsibility.

(2) **Mayor.** The Mayor shall make client decisions in litigation involving matters over which the Charter gives the Mayor responsibility.

(3) **Authority to Request the Courts to Restrain or Compel Action by City Officials.** The City Attorney shall apply, upon order of the client, in the name of the City, to a court of competent jurisdiction for an order or injunction to restrain the misapplication of funds of the City or the abuse of corporate powers, or the execution or performance of any contract made in behalf of the City which may be in contravention of the law or ordinances governing it, or which was procured by fraud or corruption. The City Attorney shall apply, upon order of the client, to a court of competent jurisdiction for a writ of mandamus to compel the performance of duties of any officer or commission which fails to perform any duty expressly enjoined by law or ordinance.

(4) **Interpretation of Section.** The City Attorney shall have the authority to make the determination regarding who is authorized to make client decisions on behalf of the City in accordance with the principles of this section and accepted principles of representation of municipal entities.

(d) Settlement of Litigation.

(1) **Settlements Involving Only Money Damages.** The Mayor and Council shall establish by ordinance a process for the approval or rejection of settlement involving money damages.

(2) **Other Settlements.** The Council shall have the authority to approve or reject settlement of litigation that does not involve only the payment or receipt of money, subject to veto of the Mayor, and Council override of the Mayor's veto, as provided under this Charter.

(e) Employment of Assistants.

The City Attorney shall appoint such deputies, assistants, and employees to serve him or her, as may be provided by ordinance of the Council, but all appointments of subordinates other than deputies and assistants shall be subject to the Civil Service provisions of this Charter.

(f) Employment of Other Legal Counsel.

(1) The Ethics Commission shall be authorized to employ outside legal counsel, as provided by section 41(d) of this Charter. The City may otherwise contract with outside legal counsel to assist the City Attorney in the discharge of his or her duties under the Charter upon written approval of the Council and the City Attorney, and consistent with budgetary appropriations.

(2) Any elected officer, department head, board or commission may engage counsel other than the City Attorney for legal advice regarding a particular matter where the elected officer, department head, board or commission has reason to believe that the City Attorney may have a prohibited financial conflict of interest under California law or a prohibited ethical conflict of interest under the California Rules of Professional Conduct with regard to the matter. The Mayor and Council shall provide by ordinance a process for determining whether the retention of outside legal counsel is justified. The cost of said process, and the cost for any of the services of outside legal counsel, shall be charged against the appropriation of the

entity requesting such counsel. The Council shall provide sufficient funds in the annual appropriation ordinance for such purposes.

Proposed Municipal Code Language

Employment of Outside Legal Counsel.

(1) The Ethics Commission shall be authorized to employ outside legal counsel, as provided by section 41(d) of the Charter. The City may otherwise contract with outside legal counsel to assist the City Attorney in the discharge of his or her duties under the Charter upon written approval of the Council and the City Attorney, and consistent with budgetary appropriations.

(2) Any elected officer, department head, board or commission may engage counsel other than the City Attorney for legal advice regarding a particular matter where the elected officer, department head, board or commission has reason to believe that the City Attorney may have a prohibited financial conflict of interest under California law or a prohibited ethical conflict of interest under the California Rules of Professional Conduct with regard to the matter, subject to the following limitations and conditions:

(A) The elected officer, department head, board or commission shall first present a written request to the City Attorney for outside counsel. The written request shall specify the particular matter for which the elected officer, department head, board or commission seeks the services of outside counsel, a description of the requested scope of services, and the potential conflict of interest that is the basis for the request. Within five working days after receiving the written request for outside counsel, the City Attorney shall respond in writing to the elected officer, department head, board or commission either consenting or not consenting to the provision of outside counsel. If the City Attorney does not consent to the provision of outside counsel, the City Attorney shall state in the written response why he or she believes that there is no conflict of interest regarding the particular matter.

(B) If the elected officer, department head, board or commission continues to believe there are adequate grounds for outside counsel despite the City Attorney's response that there is no conflict of interest, the elected officer, department head, board or commission may, within thirty days after receiving the City Attorney's response, refer the issue of whether the City Attorney has a prohibited conflict of interest regarding a particular matter to a retired judge or justice of the state courts of California for resolution. If the elected officer, department head, board or commission and City Attorney cannot agree on a retired judge to hear the matter, the retired judge shall be selected at random by an alternative dispute resolution provider. If the matter is referred to a retired judge, the elected officer, department head, board or commission, subject to the budgetary and fiscal provisions of the Charter, shall be entitled to retain outside counsel to represent it solely on the issue of whether the City Attorney has a conflict of interest regarding the particular matter.

(C) In deciding whether the City Attorney has a conflict of interest regarding a particular matter, the retired judge shall be bound by and apply the applicable substantive law and Rules of Professional Conduct as if he or she were a court of law. To the extent practicable, the retired judge shall hear the matter within 15 days after its assignment to the retired judge, and within 15 days after the hearing, shall issue a written opinion stating the basis for the decision. The retired judge, but not the City Attorney or elected officer, department head, board or commission, shall have the power to subpoena witnesses and documents in this proceeding.

(D) The retired judge may request that the City Attorney secure written advice from the California Fair Political Practices Commission, the State Bar of

California, or the California Attorney General on the question of whether the City Attorney has a conflict of interest regarding the particular matter. Upon such a request by the retired judge, the City Attorney shall secure such written advice. The retired judge may consider, but is not bound by, written advice so secured. The decision of the retired judge shall be final for the limited purpose of determining whether or not the elected officer, department head, board or commission may retain outside counsel for the particular matter.

(E) If the retired judge decides that the City Attorney does not have a conflict of interest regarding the particular matter, the City Attorney shall continue to be the legal adviser to the elected officer, department head, board or commission for such matter. If the retired judge decides that the City Attorney has a conflict of interest regarding a particular matter, the elected officer, department head, board or commission shall be entitled to retain outside counsel for legal advice regarding the particular matter, and the City Attorney shall thereupon cease to advise the elected officer, department head, board or commission on such matter. Any such finding of a conflict of interest shall not affect the City Attorney's role as legal advisor to the elected officer, department head, board or commission on all other matters.

(F) If at any time after the retention of outside counsel, the City Attorney believes that there is no longer a conflict of interest, the City Attorney shall state in writing to the elected officer, department head, board or commission why he or she believes that there is no longer a conflict of interest. Within five working days after receiving the written statement from the City Attorney, the elected officer, department head, board or commission shall respond in writing, either agreeing or disagreeing that there is no longer a conflict of interest. If the elected officer, department head, board or commission agrees that there is no longer a conflict of interest regarding a particular matter, the elected officer, department head, board or commission shall cease employing outside counsel for legal advice regarding the matter, and the City Attorney shall serve as legal adviser to the elected officer, department head, board or commission regarding that matter. If the elected officer, department head, board or commission states in its written response that it believes the conflict of interest still exists, the City Attorney may, within ten working days after receiving the response of the elected officer, department head, board or commission, elect to refer the issue of whether the conflict of interest regarding the particular matter continues to exist to the same retired judge who originally heard the matter, if available. The same procedures as established herein shall apply thereafter.

(G) In selecting outside counsel for any purpose described in subsection (f) of Charter section 40, the elected officer, department head, board or commission shall give preference to engaging the services of a City attorney's office, a County counsel's office or other public entity law office with an expertise regarding the subject-matter jurisdiction of the elected officer, department head, board or commission. If the elected officer, department head, board or commission concludes that private counsel is necessary, that attorney must be a member in good standing with the Bar of California who has at least five year's experience in the subject-matter jurisdiction of the elected officer, department head, board or commission. In selecting private counsel, the elected officer, department head, board or commission shall ensure that the attorney retained does not have a conflict of interest that would prevent him or her from providing suitable assistance. The cost of any of the services of outside legal counsel and of the alternative dispute resolution process described in this ordinance shall be charged against the appropriation of the entity requesting such counsel.